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ABSTRACT

The Supreme Court's decision in Brown vs. Board of Education is one of the most important events in the recent history of the United States. Although "Brown" prohibited the use of racial discrimination to separate the races in the Topeka (Kansas) schools, similar cases from Delaware, South Carolina, and Virginia were consolidated on appeal, and a case decided the same day held that public schools could no longer be segregated. This book describes how things have worked out in the school districts where desegregation began. Attention is focused on the districts other than Topeka because their experience better illustrates how the laws have changed and how desegregation has been redefined. Compliance with the Supreme Court's order was readily achieved in Topeka. The Court's major premise was that official segregation constituted a denial of equal protection, while its minor premise held that racial isolation damaged the confidence of black youths and distorted their self-image. In the "Brown" districts, education has suffered from naively liberal court orders, from the influence of progressive education, and from the defiant and irresponsible behavior of some students. Furthermore, in a democracy, social reform should be undertaken by the people's elected representatives and not by unelected judges. Overall, the attempt to integrate the nation's schools has been a failure, as judges have been inept educational administrators. The following chapters are included: (1) "Washington: Showcase of Integration"; (2) "Massive Resistance in Prince Edward County, Virginia"; (3) "Beyond Freedom of Choice: Clarendon County, South Carolina"; (4) "The Bus Stops Here: New Castle County, Delaware"; and (5) "Back in Topeka." (Contains 13 tables.) (SLD)

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